

## **New NY Wing Commander Credits Interest in Flying to Fighter-Pilot Dad**

New York's new wing commander, Col. Ken Andreu, is a mission pilot who credits his interest in aviation to his fighter-pilot father, Andre.

"My father began his aviation career flying Spitfires with the Royal Air Force Eagle Squadron before the United States entered the second World War," the colonel said. "After the war, he became an Air Transport pilot flying for the major airlines during a period when Hollywood actors wished they could be glamorous airline pilots."

Spending time as a cadet in the White Plains Squadron in the 1960s, Colonel Andreu returned to the Civil Air Patrol as an adult in the 1980s. He found CAP to be an organization that would "allow me the opportunity to give back and make a difference" while continuing his father's legacy, he said.

He became squadron commander of Westchester Hudson Composite Squadron and later commander of South East Group, covering six squadrons in Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess counties. He has completed the Squadron Officers School from the Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, and the National Search and Rescue School at the Yorktown Coast Guard Station, Virginia.

Today, as wing commander, Colonel Andreu oversees nine Groups, 50 squadrons and 2,400 members all across New York State.

An educator by profession, Colonel Andreu holds a Masters of Science in Special Education and a PD in School District Administration and Supervision from the College of New Rochelle. A native and resident of Valhalla, he attended elementary school in Chappaqua and then Archbishop Stepinac High School in White Plains. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from the State University College at Oneonta.

The Civil Air Patrol is a family affair for the Andreus. Wife Marcia is a registered nurse who often gives up her time to teach the cadets and seniors First Aid and CPR. Daughter Jessica is a cadet 1st lieutenant and former cadet commander of the North Castle Squadron. Sons Travis and Geoffrey are both cadets at the Westchester Hudson Composite Squadron.

Vice commander of the wing under the immediate past commander, Colonel Andreu is an incident commander, search-and-rescue and disaster relief mission pilot, and counter-drug mission pilot. He played a key role in developing an aerial surveillance program of the New York City Catskill-Croton Watershed and Aqueduct system. Called DEP/CAP, it is a joint program with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. On Sept. 12, 2001, the day after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, there were few aircraft in the skies of New York. Two of those aloft were a DEP helicopter and a CAP Cessna flying along the watershed. The Cessna was flown by Colonel Andreu and Capt. John Sweeney.

“One of my goals as wing commander is to revisit the DEP/CAP program with newly acquired technology and aircraft,” Colonel Andreu said.

Another goal, he said, is to establish a CAP Flight at Piseco Airport that would be attached to Mohawk-Griffiss Senior Squadron at Griffiss Technology Park, a former Air Force Base in Rome.

“While the one constant has been the dedication and professionalism of our members,” he noted, “this is not your grandparents’ Civil Air Patrol. Yes, we do still fly general aviation propeller-driven aircraft and utilize observers to spot downed ground targets. However, as with the regular U.S. Air Force, there has been a vast leap in the technology that is utilized for the mission.”

“Case in point,” he continued, “in the 1990s we utilized SSTV, or Slow Scan Television, from Cessna 182s. This technology recorded a picture of a target from the air, digitally broke it down by pixels and sent it via VHF to a ground receiver that reconstructed the image. This allowed for real time evaluation by the Incident Commander and Ground Base staff of the target. CAP sent images like this to the State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) in the aftermath of the 1998 Northern Tier Ice Storm. However, the target could be a downed aircraft, a lost child in a wilderness area, an illegal field of marijuana on state lands, a bridge in danger of collapsing from flash flooding, or a HAZMAT site.

“Today we have SDIS, or Satellite Digital Imaging System, affectionately called ‘Sids’, that we use from a Cessna 206 or a new Glass Cockpit Cessna 182. ‘Sids’ captures images on a computer and sends that image via satellite to any other computer with a satellite receiver like an email attachment.

“As well, we operate the ARCHER HyperSpectral Imaging System that fits into a larger eight-seat aircraft known as the Gippsland GA-8. The ARCHER system keys into different wavelengths along the ElectroMagnetic Spectrum allowing observers to work beyond and below visible light.”

Especially with advances in technology, he said, CAP prides itself with working well with other agencies, “from FEMA to the American Red Cross.”

“We are currently engaged with the 174th Fighter Wing (out of Hancock Air National Guard Base in Syracuse) in a close-air-support (CAP/CAS) program, which trains forward air controllers for deployment to combat zones,” he said.

“We work with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to locate missing persons, from lost hikers to Alzheimers patients wandering lost. We have been very active for decades with local law enforcement and Drug Enforcement Administration to search out illegal cannabis cultivation.

“We are activated weekly, sometimes daily, by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, to search for an ELT (Emergency Locator Transmitter) or EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon). Aircrews and ground teams utilizing Radio Direction Finding equipment track down the signal, often to an airport or a marina. But sometimes, it’s the real deal, and lives can hang in the balance. This is what our Emergency Services personnel train for.”

He said he was excited about the wing’s cadet program.

“We work with adolescents from 12 years to young adulthood, teaching aerospace subjects, emergency services, moral leadership and military discipline,” he said. “New York Wing runs a summer encampment for 10 days at Stratton Air National Guard Base (in Scotia), home of the 109th Airlift Wing. This is the only base in the Air Force that possesses the ski-equipped LC-130. Its polar airlift mission supports the National Science Foundation both in the Arctic and Antarctic. The many opportunities of the cadet program broaden our cadets and expose them to experiences they won’t find at the mall.”

He added: “Civil Air Patrol has technologically evolved since it was established one week before Pearl Harbor was attacked. But the character and selflessness of the CAP volunteer has been the beacon that has guided and sustained the organization longer than its parent, the United States Air Force, has existed.”

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